

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION KNOX COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE

Joint Commission & Budget Committee Review Meeting

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Thursday – November 4, 2021 – 5:00 P.M.

A Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting was held on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at 5:00 P.M., Knox County Courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Administrative Assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present: Commissioner Dorothy G. Meriwether District #1 and Commissioner Richard L. Parent, District #2.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, District Attorney Natasha Irving, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Madelene Cole, Sheriff Tim Carroll and Airport Manager Jeremy Shaw.

Budget Committee members present: Bob Duke, Barry Norris, Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody, Randy Stearns, Charles Grover, and Nick Lapham.

Absent: Commissioner Sharyn L. Pohlman, District #3 and Chair Shawn Levasseur.

Others in Attendance: Pen Bay Pilot Reporter Chris Wolf, Rockport Select Board Denise Munger and Rockport Select Board Eric Boucher.

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Please use the link below for Town Hall Streams to finish watching the meeting.

https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=50&id=40724

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| I. | 5:00 | Meeting Called To Order (Vice Chair Roger Peabody for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent for the Knox County Commission) |
| II. | 5:01 | Approve Minutes (Vice Chair Roger Peabody for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent for the Knox County Commission)
1. Minutes of the Joint Quarterly Budget Meeting of September 16, 2021. |
| III. | 5:03 | Election of Budget Committee Officers
1. Chair
2. Vice Chair
3. Secretary |
| IV. | 5:05 | Public Hearing – Remote Participation Policy
1. Budget Committee Chair Opens Public Hearing
2. Budget Committee Chair Closes Public Hearing
3. Act to Adopt a Remote Participation Policy. |
| V. | 5:08 | Public Hearing
1. Budget Committee Chair Opens Public Hearing on 2022 Proposed Knox County Budget
2. Budget Committee Chair Closes Public Hearing |
| VI. | 5:10 | Joint Meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission for the Presentation of the Proposed 2022 Budget (County Administrator |

Andrew Hart)

VII. 5:30 Budget Review

1. District Attorney
2. Probate
3. Registry of Deeds
4. County Administration & IT
5. Debt Service
6. District Attorney (Pgs. 14-15)
7. Probate (Pg. 20)
8. Registry of Deeds (Pg. 13)
9. County Administration & IT (Pgs. 8-9)
10. Debt Service (Pg. 27)

VII. Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order

The November 4, 2021 Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting was called to order by Budget Committee Vice Chair Roger Peabody and Commissioner Chair Richard Parent at 5:01 P.M.

- *Vice Chair Peabody made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:01 P.M.*
- *Commissioner Parent made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:01 P.M.*

II. Approve Minutes

1. Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of September 16, 2021.
 - *Bob Duke made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of September 16, 2021. Nick Lapham seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
 - *Commissioner Meriwether made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of September 16, 2021. Commissioner Parent seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

III. Election of Budget Committee Officers :

- a. Chair :
 - *Bob Duke made a motion to appoint Shawn Levasseur as the Chair. Barry Norris seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
- b. Vice Chair :
 - *Bob Duke made a motion to appoint Roger Peabody as the Vice Chair. Charlie Grover seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
- c. Secretary :
 - *Gayle Gallant made a motion to appoint Randy Stearns as the Secretary. Bob Duke seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

IV. Adopting the Remote Participation Policy for the Budget Committee:

- *Bob Duke made a motion to Adopt the Remote Participation Policy for the Budget Committee going forward. Barry Norris seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

V. Public Hearing:

1. Budget Committee Vice Chair Peabody Opens Public Hearing on 2022 Proposed Knox County Budget – opened to Public at 5:06 P.M.
 - No Public Comment
2. Budget Committee Chair Peabody closes Public Hearing at 5:08 P.M.

VI. Joint Meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission for the Presentation of the Proposed 2021 Budget (*County Administrator Andrew Hart*)

- The 2022 Budget process began in August of 2021, with a request to all Department Managers to submit a twelve (12) month Budget for the 2022 calendar year.
- Department Managers were asked to complete the Budget forms and submit them to the Finance Director by Friday September 10, 2021, along with any supporting information.
- The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the 2022 Budget is 5.83%, compared to 1.39% in the 2020 Budget.
- The Wage increase is a % Step increase plus a 1.39% COLA for a total of % for those employees that are eligible for the % Step increase.
- Some Departments saw a larger % increase or decrease because of a Grade change, new position, or elimination of a position. (*They will be highlighted in each Budget.*)
- FICA is set at 7.65% of the wages.
- Health Insurance is calculated with a 10% increase.
- Workers Compensation is calculated with a 10% increase. Risk Pool Assessment is calculated with a 10% increase.
- Retirement program includes the actual plan participation.
- Resignation/Termination Benefits include sick leave payments for those that have an excess of 90 sick days by the end of the year.
- The 2022total Budget shows an increase of \$816,703 (9.67%) for the County Tax Portion and \$9,130 & for the Communications Budget (1% for the Communications Budget which is an assessment.)
- The 2022 proposed Tax Assessment is \$9,445,829 and the Dispatch Assessment fee is \$1,291,976, the 2021Tax Assessment was \$8,612,782, and the Dispatch Assessment fee was \$1,282,846. The 2021 figure utilized \$100,000 in Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce the 2021 Tax Assessment figure. The 2022 figure does not include any utilization of Undesignated Fund Balance at the time to reduce the 2022 Tax Assessment.
- There are seven (5) major reasons for this increase:
 - 1) Increases in Personnel Services in all Departments based on the Wage increase.
 - 2) Projected increases in Health Insurance premium and also changes in participation
 - 3) \$41,828 increase in the Building Maintenance – Courthouse Budget, which includes a \$6,674 increase in Building Repairs & maintenance and a \$24,657 increase in Capital Projects for exterior masonry repair.
 - 4) \$75,577 increase in Sheriff's Office Personnel Services including wages and benefits and a \$30,000 increase in vehicle replacement costs.
 - 5) \$782,279 increase in the Corrections Budget. This includes a \$683,167 increase in the Jail Inmate Medical Services Contract as well as a \$278,929 increase in Capital Projects to include Exterior Masonry, Paving & HVAC upgrades.
- Bob Duke said he will not support a 10% increase in the Budget. What if we forego the Capital this year?
- Administrator Hart stated that it has been thirty (30) years since anything has been done (masonry work), and the other issue is the sidewalk and parking lot, as it is not ADA compliant. If something happens we could be on sued. Struggle is which project do we complete first.

- At the beginning of the meeting a question was asked about ARPA on behalf of the Town of St. George.
- Administrator Hart stated that ARPA will not be discussed at this time. A letter from the Commissioners regarding ARPA will be read at the next meeting on November 9th.
- ***Please note: All votes taken at each Joint Commission & Budget Committee Budget Review Meetings on Departmental Budgets are “straw votes”, with the exception of the December 16, 2021 final vote on the 2022 Knox County Budget.***

1. District Attorney (Pgs. 14-15)

Questions:

- DA Irving was asked “if you could take \$2,000 out of your Budget where would you cut?”
- DA Irving stated she would probably start with the costs that are not fixed, however a lot of lines are a fixed cost for the D.A.’s Office. (Printing, witness fees etc.)
- A suggestion was made that instead of each department reading line by line, the Budget Committee will question an area they see fit.
- A question was asked as to why it seemed like the bigger expenses were in the 4th quarter, was there a reason for that?
- Finance Director Robinson stated that all of these larger expenses happen in October of each year as they are reoccurring. The purchase of books and statues happen at the end of each year.
- A question was asked when will the statues be digital instead of having to buy the books.
- DA Irving stated that Attorney’s will say they need the paper version as sometimes the information will vary from the on line version. The book seems to be more accurate.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$520,215:

In favor: 6 (Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody, Barry Norris, Randy Stearns, Gayle Gallant and Charles Grover)

Against: 1 Bob Duke

Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$520,215:

In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Meriwether)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

2. Probate (Pg. 20)

- Register of Probate Hallett is asking for a laptop and three (3) computers to be replaced. It has been five (5) years since they have received any new computers.

Questions:

- No questions.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$187,035:

In favor: 5 (Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody, Barry Norris, Randy Stearns and Charles Grover)

Against: 0

Abstained: 2 (Bob Duke and Nick Lapham)

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$187,035:

In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Meriwether)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

3. Registry of Deeds (Pg. 13)

- Register of Deeds Cole stated the Budget is pretty straight forward. They are projected to show a steady increase.
- Deeds are asking for new work stations as they have had their current stations for twenty (20) years. They applied for Safety Grant and were awarded \$2,000 towards new work stations.

Questions:

- Questions were asked if they were going to be sit/stand work stations, how many employees are being affected and what will happen if this gets turned down?
- Register Cole stated that they have three (3) employees, the new work stations would be sit/stand stations as the old ones are not ergonomically set up for any employee. Currently we have support from the Safety Committee & Risk Management, and they came in to evaluate the stations.
- Another question was asked if there had been any Worker Comp filings.
- Register Cole stated that as of now there have not been, but one of the Employees has been complaining of back pain so it's just a matter of time. She feels that with the level of revenue they bring in, they should be allowed to upgrade seems how it's been twenty (20) years. They have processed 1,500 more documents than last year at this time.
- Administrator Hart stated that we have applied each year for a grant. Some years been successful and we were fortunate to get the grant for \$2,000 this year.
- A question was asked if it all had to be bought this year or could some be done next year?
- Register Cole stated that when recommendations come in from the Risk Pool and Safety Committee we need to comply with their suggestions.
- Administrator Hart stated that we only receive the grant if the purchase is made.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$(328,326):

In favor: 7 (Nick Lapham, Gayle Gallant, Randy Stearns, Bob Duke, Barry Norris, Roger Peabody, Charles Grover,

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$(328,326):

In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Meriwether)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

4. County Administration & IT (Pgs. 8-9)

- Administrator Hart provided the Budget Committee a memo for the Commissioners wage study. This was broke down by other Counties and Counties comparable to Knox County. Commissioners each make \$8,500 a year. The recommendation is to increase the Chair to \$10,000, and the other two (2) Commissioners to \$9,200.
- One question that was asked was do the Knox County Commissioners have benefits? Can we find out what the other Counties are doing with any benefits for Commissioners, because if this in fact the case, we need to take this into consideration.
- Administrator Hart said that he can get the information by next Tuesday's meeting so this issue can be discussed.
- Administrator Hart stated that last year's Budget (2021) had twenty-seven (27) pay periods. This year's Budget there are twenty-six (26). The reason for the larger increase to Admin. line is due to Grade increase in the IT Technical Specialist position. We were behind and needed to review and increase that salary. We were worried about losing both individuals in IT as you can make more in private sector than in County. IT Director was at Step 16 and he was brought up to Step 17. The Technical Support Specialist went from Step 9 to Step 12.
- A question was asked about the Labor Relations line. Right now it is at \$34,000, was this going to be the end for the year.
- Administrator Hart said it was a rough year due to two (2) Union Contracts expired and had to involve legal counsel for negotiations. Communications now has a Union so we will have three (3) Unions going forward. This year was an anomaly to spend that much on Labor Relations. We had so much push from one Union so we had to seek legal advice as not to encounter arbitration or a grievance. You cannot Budget this as you never know what will be happening.
- A question was asked as to what is our portion of retirement?
- Finance Director Robinson stated that Maine PERS is 9% and ICMA is 7%

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$649,046:

*In favor: 5 (Gayle Gallant, Barry Norris, Roger Peabody, Charles Grover and Randy Stearns)
Against: 2 Bob Duke and Nick Lapham
Abstained: 0*

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$649,046:

*In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Meriwether)
Against: 0
Abstained: 0*

5. Debt Service (Pg. 27)

- Debt Service has decreased since 2021.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$198,832:

*In favor: 7 (Nick Lapham, Gayle Gallant, Tom Marshall, Jr., Randy Stearns, Bob Duke, Barry Norris, Roger Peabody, Charles Grover)
Against: 0
Abstained: 0*

*A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$**198,832**:*

In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Meriwether)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

VII. Adjourn

- *Barry Norris made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Charles Grover seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
- *Commissioner Meriwether made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Parent seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

The next Joint Quarterly Budget Committee & Commission Meeting will be held on November 9th
@ **5:00 P.M.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission approved these minutes
at the Joint Meeting held on November 9, 2021.**